

Of bookstores, bow ties and tea drinkers by tinyarmedtrex

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Genre: Bookstore AU, Eddie drinks tea and owns a bookstore and is generally adorable, M/M, Side Benverly - Freeform, and Richie is smitten, and jealous

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Summary:

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“Thank you again.” The man said, pushing his glasses up. “I could have been trapped there all night.”

“Always happy to help someone in distress.” Richie replied, smiling at him. “Even if it was from their own folly.”

Richie fell even more in love as the man blushed, his cheeks matching the red in his sweater.

or, Richie falls for the cute bookstore owner

Of bookstores, bow ties and tea drinkers

Author's Note:

- For [richietoaster](#).

“Another book? Wow, what a shock Richie.” Stan said, ripping open the paper to reveal his birthday present.

“You like books! And it’s about birds!” Richie said defensively as he tapped the cover. “See? Birds of South America, it’s perfect.”

“But that’s not why you got it.” Stan replied, putting the book aside. “Don’t deny it.”

Richie shrugged, unwilling to say more. It didn’t matter though, his friends had already moved onto the teasing portion of the evening.

“Richie has a crushhhh,” Bev sang, bumping him with her shoulder. “On the book store boyyyyy.”

“Shut up Bev,” He said, feeling himself going red. He was used to the teasing that accompanied any of new crushes but he felt different about this one. The dorky little bookstore owner had captured his heart without even trying. It wasn’t fair.

Months ago, Richie had stumbled into the small second hand book, trying to escape the rain. It had been the only open shop and he’d fallen in love with it the second he walked in. The place smelled like tea and sugar cookies, the shelves were lined with books, nearly collapsing under the weight. Everything was balanced precariously and he could feel the love and devotion that went into it.

“Hello?” He had called, not seeing anyone except for a tabby cat that was sitting on the counter. “Do you work here buddy?” Richie had asked, stroking under the cat’s chin.

“Oh thank god,” He heard someone mutter. “Can you help me?” The voice had called, louder this time.

Richie had wandered through the classics, romances, sci-fi, until he

finally found a smaller man who was holding up a stack of books that had tumbled, nearly taking down the rows next to him. If not for him holding them up Richie was sure that several other stacks would have fallen too. He was trapped, if he moved the books would fall but he couldn't push them back up on his own.

"What the hell?" Richie asked, rushing over and trying to help.

"I made a mistake." The man said, exhaling as Richie took the books from him, using his other hand to steady the pile. "I was trying to grab one of the books from the middle of the stack and they all just fell." Richie kept grabbing books as the man explained, sounding flustered and annoyed with himself. "Thank you, I wasn't sure what I was going to do. Peanut Butter was useless."

"Peanut Butter?"

"The cat." The smaller man explained, stretching his arms as Richie took the last of the books. Only then did he get a better look at the man. He was utterly adorable, wearing a sweater vest and bow tie with his fitted slacks. Small glasses sat on his nose and his blond curls were tousled from holding up the books. Richie had to remind himself not to stare.

"Thank you again." The man said, pushing his glasses up. "I could have been trapped there all night."

"Always happy to help someone in distress." Richie replied, smiling at him. "Even if it was from their own folly."

Richie fell even more in love as the man blushed, his cheeks matching the red in his sweater. The man coughed then asked, "Are you looking for anything in particular?"

Just a date, Richie thought. Outloud he said, "I was trying to escape the rain."

The man nodded, glancing outside. "It's pretty bad." He glanced at Richie, biting his bottom lip. It was a gesture that Richie would soon become very familiar with. It meant that the man was nervous about what he was about to say or ask.

“Do you want some tea? It’s the least I can do since you saved me from being crushed by my own collection.”

“I’d love some tea-” He paused.

“Eddie,” The man supplied.

“Richie.”

That had been months ago. Since then Richie had been going back nearly every week, always under the guise of needing a new book. All his friends were sick of books as gifts but Richie needed a reason to go back, to see Eddie. He’d spend hours there talking to Eddie while he played with Peanut Butter. His heart leapt into his throat at the small smile Eddie gave him whenever Richie walked in. He loved it.

“Why don’t you just ask him out already?” Stan asked, taking a piece of cake from Bev. “From everything you’ve said he likes you too.”

“Yea, he bought you tea.” Bev said, glancing at the new kettle that Richie had bought for his growing tea collection. “That’s probably a marriage proposal in some countries.”

“I think he’s just a nice guy. It doesn’t mean anything.” Richie muttered, running a hand through his hair. He didn’t like talking about Eddie, his friends didn’t get it. Eddie was special, Richie couldn’t just ask him out like it was nothing.

“He had that illustrated Hobbit book shipped in for you.” Stan added.

“He was excited someone else wanted to see it!”

Stan and Bev exchanged knowing looks and Richie stood. “I need to go.”

“Going to see Eddie?” Stan teased.

“Fuck off.” He said, shrugging on his coat. He wasn’t to admit that, yes he was going to see Eddie because he had a toy for Peanut Butter in one pocket and a bottle of honey for Eddie, a fancy one from the farmer’s market, in the other.

He was so fucked.

“Richie!” Eddie brightened as he entered, putting down the book he was reading. He was perched on his chair, a mug to his right, like he was every time Richie saw him. He was utterly perfect and Richie nearly tripped over his feet, too focused on how cute the image was.

“How did the book go over?” Eddie asked, carefully placing a bookmark on the page before closing the book.

Richie nodded. “Good, good, Stan was delighted.”

Eddie smiled, nodding too. “Good! I’m happy to hear it, I know you spent a lot of time here looking for the perfect thing.”

Eddie’s smile could light the city, Richie decided. He could end wars with it, bring world peace.

He realized Eddie was waiting for him to reply. “I did. That’s okay, Stan the Man is worth it, even if he is a total asshole.”

Eddie shook his head, smiling. “One day I want to meet your friends.”

Without prompting Richie’s mind went to all of them together, him out with Eddie, holding hands and introducing him to Stan and Bev. The mental image made him smile. He knew they would all adore Eddie.

“I’d like that. I want to meet yours too.” Eddie talked about his friends, Mike and Bill, all the time. At first Richie had been jealous, thinking that Eddie was dating one of them, but once Eddie clarified had that they were together Richie instantly liked them more.

“Maybe we could organize something?” Eddie asked. Richie was bent over, petting Peanut Butter. He missed the hopeful tone of Eddie’s voice.

“Maybe.” Richie straightened, reaching in his pocket. “I brought you something.” He handed Eddie the honey, smiling at how excited the man was. “I know your throat has been hurting, hopefully this will help.”

"You didn't have to." Eddie said, turning the jar around to read the small card about the farm it came from.

By his feet Peanut Butter meowed, weaving through his legs. "I didn't forget you." Richie said, grabbing the cat nip mouse from his pocket.

When he stood again Eddie was shaking his head. "You spoil her."

"I crave her love and affection, what can I say?" He watched as she batted the mouse, rubbing her face against it.

"I think you've got it, you're certainly her favorite customer."

Richie turned to him, elbows on Eddie's counter. "What about you?"

"You don't buy enough to be my favorite." Eddie replied, smiling.

"Oh, my heart! You're a cruel man Kaspbrak."

Eddie opened his mouth to reply when someone called for him. "Hey Eddie! Where do you want this box of books? I can't decide if they're fantasy or sci fi."

Richie watched as from the back of the store an attractive man emerged, muscles in his arms bulging from the box of books he carried. He wanted to growl at him to go away but knew it wasn't Ben's fault that he looked like a damn sports illustrated model. (It was his fault that he was also the kindest man in the world, and Richie did hold that against him.) He was Eddie's newest and only hire, around on weekends to help Eddie restock. Richie had no idea if he was gay but he knew that Eddie smiled at him and that made Richie hate him.

"I'll be right there." Eddie called then he turned to Richie. "Can you stay for a bit?"

He shook his head. "No, I should go. I've got a shift soon."

The last thing he wanted to listen to was Eddie talk about how big and strong Ben was. He watched as the man easily lifted the box above his head, not even breaking a sweat.

Utterly unfair.

He was too busy staring at Ben to see how Eddie's face fell. "Okay well, see you soon."

Yea." With that Eddie hopped off his stool and headed to the back, already telling Ben where the new Brandon Sanderson books went.

Richie watched for only a second before leaving, wishing that the day had gone differently.

When he texted Bev about it that night she had been utterly annoyed with him and told him that his pining had gone on for too long and that she was going with him tomorrow to decide if Eddie liked Richie or not. He'd tried to protest but once Bev set her mind to something there was no stopping her.

"Hey Eds," Richie called as they entered.

"Nicknames too?" Bev whispered, poking his side.

"Fuck off Marsh." He mumbled, scanning for Eddie. He wasn't at his usual spot and for a second Richie wondered if he'd finally been swallowed by one of the teetering piles of books.

Then he heard Eddie's voice. "We're back here!"

They wound back and found Eddie and Ben pinning up posters in the kid's section.

"Eddie, I brought Bev. Bev, Eddie, Eddie Bev."

Eddie extended a hand. "Great to finally meet you."

"You too." She said, smiling. "I've heard a lot about you."

Eddie glanced at Richie, who was glaring at Bev. "I told her about your store." He said quickly.

"Your store, your cat, your bow tie collection." Bev listed, smiling and taking her hand back. "I feel like I already know you."

Eddie cocked his head, watching Richie with a far too knowing look. He quickly changed the subject, pointing to the posters. "Are those new?"

Eddie nodded. "What do you think? Ben found them." He asked, moving aside and looking up at the poster. It was an illustration from a kid's book and it was perfect, like everything Ben did. It fit into the small space and added a splash of color. Richie couldn't believe he hadn't thought of it first.

"I think this one is crooked." He replied. Unthinkingly, Richie moved in, crowding Eddie as he reached for the top of the poster and raised the corner. When he finished he looked down, seeing that Eddie was bright red. Richie had put a hand on his shoulder to steady himself, pressing himself against Eddie as he did.

"There, that's better." Richie said, reluctantly moving back. He glanced over, expecting to see Bev making fun of him but she was making eyes at Ben, who was shyly smiling at her.

"I need to go grab the rest of the posters." Ben said. "I'll be right back."

"I'll go with you." Bev offered, following Ben outside. "Help you carry them."

"Because posters are so heavy!" Richie shouted after them.

"I think you just lost me my assistant." Eddie said, shaking his head.

Richie turned to him, Bev and Ben already forgotten. "I'll help you. I'm better than him anyway. What do you need?"

Eddie looked at him, smiling. "Do you know how to run a bookstore?"

"No- but I'm a damn quick learner." Eddie hesitated so Richie got down on one knee, and took Eddie's hands as he begged, "Oh please Eddie, please let me spend my Saturday here stirring up my allergies and organizing books. Its always been a dream of mine!"

"Gee, when you put it like that..." Eddie joked but he nodded. "Come

on, I need to dust the non-fiction section.”

“Do you have a maid’s uniform? I’ve been told I have great legs.” Richie asked as he followed Eddie.

Two hours later and he was covered in dust and laughing up a storm. He’d barely seen Bev or Ben, other than hearing her laughter from other parts of the store. He was too busy helping Eddie. He’d held Eddie’s waist as he counted the narnia novels, helped him grab high boxes and in general been on cloud nine from spending the day with him. At one point Eddie had even taken Richie’s glasses off and cleaned them with his own small glasses towel, which Richie thought was the sexiest thing he’d ever seen. He’d nearly died when Eddie placed the glasses back on him, proclaiming them cleaner than they’d been in months.

“I hate to do this but I’ve got dinner plans.” Richie said, groaning as he stood. They’re been in the YA section, organizing the books and he was stiff from being on the floor.

“A date?” Eddie asked nervously.

“Nah, just with friends.” He turned around. “Bev darling, are you ready?”

She popped her head over, Richie couldn’t help but notice that her hair was more mussed than when she’d left. At least someone was getting lucky with a bookstore boy.

“Of course.” She turned back, blowing a kiss. “I’ll see you tomorrow Ben!” She called before walking up to him and Eddie.

“Eddie, it was great to meet you. I hope I’ll see you again soon.”

“You too Bev, thanks for spending your Saturday here.”

She grinned. “I couldn’t have asked for a better day.” With that she linked her arm in Richie’s and lead him out the front door.

“Well, I have a date with Ben tomorrow. What about you?” She asked as they walked.

He gaped at her, jealous. "Damn Bev! You work fast."

She shrugged. "He's sweet, and single- and not at all interested in Eddie so you can stop glaring at him whenever he speaks. Speaking of," She poked him. "Ben said that Eddie has it as bad as you."

"How was this not the first thing out of your mouth!" He said, rounding on her. "Tell me everything!"

She shook her head, smiling ruefully at him. " Well, Ben said that Eddie lights up when he talks about you and that he'd confused why you haven't asked him out. And he thinks you're pretty damn cute."

Richie knew he probably looked dumb, grinning from ear to ear, but he couldn't stop himself. He'd suspected and hoped that Eddie felt the same but actually hearing it was something else.

Bev reached over and punched him. "This means you need to ask him out! Soon!"

"Okay okay!" He said, rubbing his arm. "Tomorrow, I will tomorrow."

She nodded, satisfied with that answer. "If you don't I will. He's really cute Richie. Adorable even. You were kinda underselling him."

"Don't take my man Marsh." He pointed a finger at her as they started walking again.

The next day found Richie outside the bookstore, pacing on the sidewalk as he tried not to bump the flowers he was holding. He'd been there for fifteen minutes, unable to convince himself to go inside. Even knowing that Eddie liked him too didn't help, he was still a nervous wreck. He probably would have left if not for the door opening to reveal Eddie, his arms wrapped around himself to ward off the cold.

"Did you want to come in?" He asked. "Or are you going to warm my sidewalk all day?"

Richie flushed, embarrassed that he was caught but also grateful to be pulled out of his purgatory. He followed Eddie inside.

"I just got here." He said as Eddie stopped and looked at him.

"Don't lie. Peanut Butter has been meowing at the door, waiting for you to come in for at least a quarter for an hour."

Richie opened then closed his mouth. "Fine. Maybe I was out there for a *little* while."

"Why?"

"I was wondering if- do you want- well- I got you flowers." Richie said, shoving the bouquet at Eddie.

"Thanks." Eddie accepted them with a smile, smelling them. He bit his bottom lip then asked, "Would you want to go out with me sometime?"

Richie gaped at him, shocked that Eddie had beaten him to the punch. "Eds! You stole the words from my mouth!"

"You seemed to be having trouble with them." He replied, a sly smile on his lips. "Plus Ben threatened to un-alphabetize my books if I didn't ask you."

"Bev said she'd un-tune my ukulele." Richie said as he stepped forward, crowding Eddie's space and making the shorter man look up.

"So do you?" Eddie asked quietly. "Or are you actually that interested in my tea collection?"

"Why can't it be both?" Richie replied, sliding his hand over Eddie's cheek. He felt the skin warm under his hand as they both smiled. Something in him relaxed at that smile. "I'd love to. When are you free?"

Eddie glanced around the empty bookstore. "How about now?"
"Can't think of a better time."